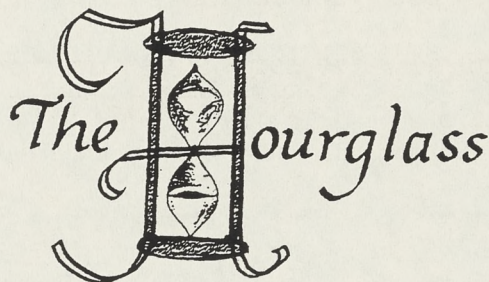


# Historical Society of Palm Desert

P.O. Box 77

Palm Desert, CA 92261

(760) 346-6588



Community

Service

Collections

Archives

FALL 2000

VOL. 8, NO. 3

## YOU HAVE SURVIVED ANOTHER GOOD OLD SUMMERTIME

It's that time of the year when summer is behind us and we can get back to some kind of normal routine. While the Society office was closed during July and August, many of us had a chance to travel, seeing new sights and visiting friends and relatives. No matter where we go, it's always good to get back to our beloved desert.....there's no place like home!

### FALL LUNCHEON

**Speaker: Stan Sniff / Installation of New Officers**

The first event of the season will be a luncheon at Desert Falls Country Club on October 25th. Mary Safe has arranged for a wonderful almond encrusted chicken breast meal and an enjoyable program. During this meeting Dan Callahan will step down as President of the Society and take on the title of Immediate Past-President, and Ginny Folkers will take the reigns as President. Installation of other new officers includes:

Roger Keezer - Vice-President

Bonnie Bowie - Secretary

Bob Wilmeth - Treasurer

Also, you have elected the following to the Board of Directors for the term 2000-2002:

Caroline Berkey

Barbara Keedy Eastes

Jean Ernst

Ginny Mullins

Bruce Hagerman

Loraine Vallat Meyer

Dan Kelly

Joyce White

Gary Olesen

Walter Snyder

Hal Rover

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(cut off here)

### LUNCHEON RESERVATION FORM

NAME(S) \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: Wednesday, October 25

TIME: 11:00 social hour, 12:00 luncheon

PLACE: Desert Falls Country Club

COST: \$18 per person

Enclosed is my check for \$ \_\_\_\_\_

NUMBER ATTENDING: \_\_\_\_\_

Mail check to: Historical Society of Palm Desert/P.O. Box 77/Palm Desert, CA 92261



### HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF PALM

(During the summer I, Ginny Folkers - Curator, came across this interesting document. I have not been able to identify the author or determine the date it was written, but I'm sure you will enjoy reading it.)

It is said that for many centuries the area covering Palm Desert, Rancho Mirage and Indian Wells (roughly from Cook Street to Magnesia Falls according to historical records) was inhabited by the A-a-chum Cahuilla Indians. The earliest recorded village of this band was called Kavenish, and on early maps it was shown as Sand Hole.

- 1823 --The first hand-dug well was recorded. It had one palm tree beside it.
- 1853 --The Pacific Railway Survey was made, and a thriving Cahuilla Indian village was noted.
- 1860 --A second well was dug by San Bernardino County. Both wells vanished during the great flood of 1916.
- 1862 --Gold was discovered on the Colorado River and the Bradshaw Wagon Road was built through the desert. One of its five stations, built of stone and adobe, was located in Indian Wells. In this area horses were often stolen and holdups were frequent.
- 1906 --A monocled Englishman, Edington Endless, led a gang of four who held up a detachment of cavalry headed for Fort Yuma with a payroll of \$9,000.
- 1908 --Homesteaders began coming into the area.
- 1910 --The Blairs settled where Palm Desert Country Club is now located. The Harmons, who were known for their beautiful glassware which was left in the sun to turn lavender or purple, located on Highway 111.
- 1914 --A mule skinner, named Hayhurst, who worked for a mining company, started Rancho Palm Springs on the site of the Eldorado Country Club. Three years later he stretched wire on convenient fences, posts and trees for a ten-part telephone line. This ambitious endeavor spanned the area from what is now Cook Street to Indio.
- The Caleb E. Cook Ranch covered the entire area of what is now Indian Wells. It was a show place for Deglet Noor date palms. Lettie, Caleb's wife, died around 1984 at the age of 106 years. Their son, William "Bill", married a girl named Carmen who later taught at the first school in Palm Desert, which is now Washington Charter School. William eventually became the Riverside County Supervisor for the 4th District.
- 1915 --The Blairs started the first store. The Conroys located near the Cook date gardens -- Jessie Conroy was a graduate of Wellsley.



Overview of Palm Desert Area (continued):

The early pioneers suffered through the hot summers and often flooded winters. There were few conveniences. They shared the hardships of intense heat, sand storms, floods, insects, reptiles, wild animals and limited water facilities. They "made do" with little help and neighborliness was essential for survival.

Early 1920's --A man named Frey built a cabin near Magnesia Falls, dug a well and called it "Our Araby." He conducted a mail route to Indio. Later a stone picnic table was built nearby for local ranchers and their families to use when visiting the falls.

The "Eleven Mile Ranch" (being 11 miles from Palm Springs) was started by the George Jenks family, who were early homesteaders.

1929 --King G. Gillett, the razor blade tycoon, purchased the McDonald Ranch which was on the north side of Highway 111. At the time it was referred to as 480 acres of mesquite wasteland. Gillett built a well, pumping plant and reservoir. He added five more wells, built six homes, planted 4,500 grapefruit trees and a few acres of Sady dates. Gillett called this settlement Palm Village.

1938 --Gillett sold his holdings to William Johnson, who developed it further. He planted an area one mile by one and a half miles with more homes, orchards and date gardens.

This development was taken over by the Mollin Investment Company and officially named Palm Village. This was the beginning of the Palm Desert area.

During W.W. II -- General Patton used the cove (now Palm Desert) to establish a maintenance camp in the Deep Canyon area while training his troops in the desert proper. A trail was blazed to the camp along what is now Portola Avenue. During the heat of the summer the big GMC trucks went "underground" (covered with burlap and canvas.) The men were known to buy their Cokes at the Palm Village Inn near where Portola meets Highway 111.

Many years earlier -- Randall Henderson had been in the area. He was a newspaper man, a writer and a desert explorer. While on a trek through the Santa Rosa range he had seen the cove. When he told his brother, Cliff Henderson, that it would make a very good residential area, they purchased 14 parcels of land in the cove.

1947 --Randall Henderson moved his Desert Magazine plant from El Centro to the buildings on Highway 111 near the east end of El Paseo. The group of buildings was designed according to authentic Indian pueblos. It was the first publishing company in the desert, and the Desert Magazine Building eventually housed a museum and art gallery.



Overview of Palm Desert Area (continued):

In the late 1940's -- Cliff Henderson began the development that became Palm Desert.

In the 40's and 50's -- Bob Keedy started his coffee shop; Ed Mullins, the Palm Desert Pharmacy; Jerry Malone's service station; the Carpenter's furniture store; Bud Godfrey, Palm Village market; the Andrews built the first grocery store; the Eckerts, hardware and lumber; Jeannette Constantino (Yoximer) the first secretarial service; Faye Kennebeck, Airlansea; the Markleys, Christine's shop; Jean Hanousek (Martin), the first bookkeeping service; Evelyn Chevoor, Irene Fenton, Evelyn Hackborn, Ada Chambers, the Shadow Mountain Palette Club and others were among the firsts in Palm Desert.

During this period -- Hank Gogerty built a private facility called Desert Air Park and Hotel. It was located in what is now Rancho Mirage on Rio del Sol (now Bob Hope Drive.) His enterprise assisted residents of the community and members of the new Thunderbird Country Club, as well as Shadow Mountain Club and visitors from all over the country to reach the desert by private plane.

1948 -- The Shadow Mountain Club with it's famous figure-eight pool was opened with great fanfare.

1949 -- The first building for the Community Church was built on Portola Avenue. Prior to this, members met outdoors, some arriving on horseback. A volunteer fire station was established.

1951 -- Palm Village officially joined Palm Desert.

The Randall Hendersons donated land for the first library building on Portola. Cyria Henderson, a sculptress, did a bust of General Eisenhower for the Community Church and an Indian woman for the entrance of the library

1955 -- The first shopping center in the desert was built by the Hansons. The first library was started through the efforts of Dr. and Mrs. Edward C. Ruge (Adele Ruge North) assisted by local civic groups and the Palm Desert Woman's Club.

1973 -- After two other attempts at incorporation, the City of Palm Desert finally became a reality in November 1973.

Today -- Thanks to the far-sighted pioneers that went before us and forward-looking people who run City Hall, Palm Desert has developed and grown in every direction. We each have something to contribute to this desert paradise, no matter what our age or station in life. What more would you like to contribute? We are grateful to our members, for here at the Historical Society we realize that we can do nothing to preserve the past and serve the community in the present without your support.



## IN MEMORIAM



Ann McDougall passed away on July 26 in Portland, Oregon after a long illness. She and her late husband, Natt Jr., were long time desert residents. Ann is survived by three daughters and a son.

### THINK OF US FIRST

When you are looking for information about almost anything, ask us first. Our archives might have just what you need, not just on local history; but most any subject. Where to take visitors, schooling options, the Salton Sea, population, artists, authors, government, medical problems, utilities.....you name it, we got it!

### WE NEED YOUR INPUT

**Golf Cart Parade** - This year, in addition to the having the restored fire engine and Mr. & Mrs. Santa bringing up the rear in the parade, we would like to introduce a reminder of "Fun in the Sun" from years past.....Andy the Donkey Man. Our problem is that we can't find a donkey for our "Andy" to lead. Do you have or know of a gentle creature that wouldn't mind walking in front of Engine #1 on Nov. 12? If you do, please call Doloris Driskell at 346-1394 or leave a message for her at the office....346-6588.

**Building Blueprints** - The Society has all the residential and commercial blueprints for buildings that were within the area that was covered by the now dissolved Palm Desert Property Owners Association. These could save homeowners money in architects' fees for remodels and additions. Also they are helpful in tracking down plumbing and electrical lines. Would you be interested in having the plans for your home or business? If so, call and leave a message on our office phone. We want to find out if it would be worth the effort to sort all of them. Also available are the blueprints of the late John Outcault.

### Give Us Your Ideas .... about:

- Exhibits you would like to see us set up this year.....movie stars?, pioneers? etc.
- Field trips.....where to?
- Shows.....art, crafts, ....what?
- Historic home tours? Do you know of places we could visit?
- Fund-raising ideas; maybe something you have tried in the past.

It's your Society -- tell us what you would enjoy. Call 346-6588 and leave a message, write us a note, or drop by on Mon., Tues. or Thurs. from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

### Volunteers:

- Docents to show visitors around.
- Help with mailings, like the newsletter.
- Researchers to compile historic info.
- Writers to edit reports.
- Sorters and filers.
- Telephoners for special events.
- Someone to man the office on occasion.
- Help at Mini-Musters in October.
- Photo I.D., photographers.
- Help with our Golf Cart Parade entry.
- Speakers, hosts & hostesses for lunches.

### HELEN OLIVER

Our new office lady was recommended to us by Bob Wilmeth, our Treasurer. Come meet her at the luncheon.



### GIVE YOUR CHILDREN A Unique Gift

There is something you can give that can't be bought.....the story of your life. Have you ever thought about writing where you've been, what you've done, how you feel about things? Richard Kelly, Palm Desert's popular City Councilman, is doing just that. He has finished the first part, which is about his career in the Air Force. It is entertaining, informative, and it introduces you to the man behind the text and photos. You'll find a copy in our archives, drop by and read it. If you decide to write about your life....we'll help you.... even type it if you don't have a computer. If it contains some Palm Desert history, we would be very interested.

### MINI-MUSTER

October was proclaimed Fire prevention and Mini-Muster month by the cities of Palm Desert and Indian Wells. This is one of the Society's outreach programs in co-operation with Riverside County Fire Dept. - Station #33 and the Desert Sands Unified School District. Third graders from James Carter, Gerald Ford, Abraham Lincoln and George Washington Charter Schools participated. The half-day activity is followed by lunch (thanks to the school moms) and an awards assembly.

Mini-Muster means a "small gathering." Over 3500 children have completed this hands on fire safety program since 1993. The children, staff and parents were enthusiastic in their appreciation.

Jan Holmlund is the consultant for this project, and Dan and BJ Callahan are the coordinators. Roger Keezer is Fire Truck #1 engineer. They were assisted by Adele and Ed Ruxton, Jeanne Ahrens, Mary Noble, Ginny Folkers, Gary Olesen and Angie Rover.

Jan, Dan and BJ are most grateful to their committee and all who lent a hand. Also the City of Palm Desert and the City of Indian Wells are to be commended for their continuing support. Lastly, the operational skills and leadership demonstrated by our fire fighters are invaluable and deeply appreciated.

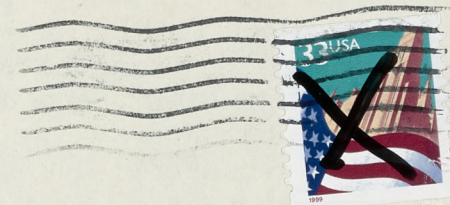
**DID YOU TRAVEL DURING THE SUMMER?**  
The Keezers, Hagermans and the Folkers all took a trip to Europe.

Keep in touch!

Ginny Folkers  
Editor

P. S. Did you pay your dues on April 1? If not, we could use the funds.

Historical Society of Palm Desert  
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